



# THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY

The Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Gay and Lesbian Task Force / Vol.2, Issue 4

## REV. SPAHR TO VISIT THE VALLEY NOV. 3-6

**OCTOBER 1995**

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#### EXTRA! EXTRA!

Read all about what happened when a gay couple announced their commitment ceremony in the Weddings and Engagements sections of a local newspaper. See page 3.

#### COMING OUT

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#### LOOKING AHEAD

The Task Force will sponsor a seminar to help couples develop stronger legal and financial bonds. See page 4.

#### VACANCY

Task Force is looking for a woman to fill a vacancy on the board of directors. See page 4.

#### The Voice of Valley

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the Lehigh Valley Gay  
and Lesbian Task Force  
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#### Communications Committee

Frank Baran, co-chair  
Peach Trigiani, co-chair  
Kim Snyder, member

Frank Baran, editor  
Chris Gaugler, design

Janie Spahr — The Rev. Dr. Jane Adams Spahr — is coming to the Lehigh Valley on Nov. 3-6. Her particular areas of interest, in addition to her status as an ordained lesbian Presbyterian minister, are justice issues for the gay/lesbian/bisexual community, counteracting homophobia and reaching out to young people who are struggling with their lesbian or gay sexuality. She has also worked extensively with people with AIDS.

Janie, as she prefers to be called, became national news in 1991 when the Downtown Presbyterian Church in Rochester, N.Y., called her to be one of their pastors. This was the first time a member congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) had chosen an openly lesbian pastor. Prior to that Janie had served for more than a decade as founder and head of Spectrum, an organization for lesbian/gay/bisexual people in Marin County, Calif.

A group of churches in the Rochester-area Presbytery of the Genesee Valley decided that Downtown Presbyterian could not go against the rule that a "practicing" homosexual could not serve in an ordained capacity. After ecclesiastical hearings and appeals, the Permanent Judicial Commission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) refused to allow Janie to assume the pastoral position.

Some members of the Downtown Presbyterian Church, along with Spectrum, decided to raise money so that Janie could trav-

el around the country, speaking particularly about justice issues and reaching out to young people who are at risk of resorting to suicide as they uncover their true sexuality.

Janie's schedule includes presentations at Moravian College, Moravian Theological Seminary and Northampton Community College in Bethlehem; Lafayette College in Easton; Kutztown University; and Muhlenberg College in Allentown. In addition, she will preach Sunday morning, Nov. 5, at the Grace Covenant Church in Allentown; Metropolitan Community Church in Allentown in the evening; and at a community worship service at 3 p.m. Sunday at Moravian Theological Seminary. These services are open to all who wish to attend.

There will be a Women's Spirituality meeting Saturday evening at Wesley Methodist Church in Bethlehem, and it is hoped that there can be a meeting Saturday morning particularly for all those who must deal with discrimination issues in the workplace. She is also open to having one-on-one meetings with young people as they deal with their emerging sexuality.

Further information will be provided in a variety of ways nearer the time of the visit. An Ad Hoc Committee is responsible for Janie's visit and the weekend's program. If you have questions, you may contact either Mary Borhek at 865-2649 or the Rev. Peter Skelly at 865-6686. ▲

## HAVE YOU FILLED OUT THE DISCRIMINATION SURVEY?

The Discrimination Committee reports that more than 1,300 people filled out questionnaires about their personal experiences with anti-gay bias in employment, housing and public accommodations.

The survey campaign is continuing. The more people

participate, the better. Responses are anonymous.

Committee Co-Chair Renae Bennett said it's not too late for you become involved. The questionnaire takes only a few minutes to complete.

If you haven't been to the Pride Festival or the FACT Summer Games, and haven't

run across a survey taker at the bars, please call the Task Force information line at (610) 515-1551 and a questionnaire will be mailed to you.

Task Force members received questionnaires by mail in June. If you haven't responded yet, please do! ▲



# COMING ATTRACTIONS

## Gay Men's Chorus

The Lehigh Valley Gay Men's Chorus will present a concert at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 4, at the new United Wesleyan Church on Center Street in Bethlehem.

Music will include "Testament of Freedom" by Randall Thompson with words by Thomas Jefferson. Beverly Morgan, the artistic director of ACCO, a chorus celebrating women, will be the featured performer in Brahms' "Alto Rhapsody." A variety of other selections will be sung.

For further information, call 821-0578.

## Lehigh Valley Lesbians

Lehigh Valley Lesbians has had a couple organizational meetings and has an exciting and informative schedule for the coming months.

LVL meets on Tuesday evenings (usually the first Tuesday) at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church at 701 Lechaweki Ave. in Fountain Hill.

Oct. 3 brought attorney Anne Felker to speak about legal issues pertinent to the lesbian community, including health care and employment.

On Nov. 7, Jacqueline Marish, M.A., will be discussing "Empowerment." Learn how to feel good about yourself as a woman and a lesbian.

To wrap up the year, Dec. 5 is a Christmas party. Come out to celebrate the holiday season and join in the merriment of games, singing, tasty morsels and reveling in each other's company. Please bring a snack or dessert to share.

In 1996, there will be a great lineup of speakers and fun events for women in the Lehigh Valley. For further information, call 437-5915.

## Lesbian Support Group

The Lesbian Support Group is looking for some new faces to meet every other week to share life's peaks and valleys. This group consists of women who are committed to meeting on regular basis and staying in the group. If you are interested in more information, call 437-5915.

# LAWSUIT SAYS LOCAL BEAUTY SCHOOL FORCES GAY EMPLOYEES TO QUIT

By **FRANK BARAN**

A beauty school with locations in Allentown and Bethlehem has a policy of harassing gay employees into quitting, according to a federal lawsuit filed in Philadelphia.

Gordon Phillips School of Beauty Culture fears the employees might eventually contract HIV and become a burden on the company's health-care benefits program, the lawsuit said.

Robert Rychalsky, the former controller at the beauty school, charged the school and its president and majority stock holder, Stan Gordon, with violating two federal statutes that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability.

Rychalsky said he was present in meetings in which the school's executives, including Gordon, discussed ways to increase profitability. According to the lawsuit, Gordon and the unnamed executives followed a policy of identifying employees who had higher than average health-care costs, such as those with AIDS or cancer, and harassing them into quitting.

"At the direction of Stan Gordon and other executives of Gordon Phillips, Gordon Phillips also followed a policy of identifying individuals who it suspected might in the future incur higher than average health-care costs, such as employees who Gordon Phillips knew or suspected to be homosexual and feared might be more likely to become infected with HIV in the future," the lawsuit said.

Rychalsky, who filed the complaint, is not gay. He was diagnosed with a brain tumor in December 1990 and immediately was subjected to harassment, according to the lawsuit. Rychalsky said Gordon used verbal abuse, expanded his workload without reason, tampered with his files, read his mail, cut him out of meetings of senior executives and told Rychalsky's staff to ignore him.

In January 1993, Rychalsky under-

went surgery for removal of the tumor, leading Gordon to redouble efforts to get ride of him, according to the lawsuit. Rychalsky had a second surgical procedure in January 1995 and has since exhausted his benefits under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

"Suffice to say, they now have somebody else doing his job," said Christopher J. Moran, one of Rychalsky's attorneys with the Philadelphia law firm of Schnader, Harrison, Segal & Lewis.

Moran declined to say whether anyone else other than Rychalsky lost his job as a result of discriminatory treatment. The law firm is gathering more evidence to present at the trial. The date of the trial has not been scheduled.

Gordon was not available for comment.

From its headquarters in Upper Darby, Gordon Phillips operates 12 cosmetology schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland.

The lawsuit charges that the school and Gordon violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, both of which prohibit discrimination based on disability. Both laws regard HIV or AIDS as a disability. Violators can be ordered to pay compensatory damages and enjoined against further discriminatory acts.

The laws do not prevent employers from firing people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act does protect those who are perceived as having a disability, such as AIDS or HIV. For example, a gay man who is fired because his employer suspects he has HIV or AIDS can sue for damages.

The Americans with Disabilities Act covers all businesses and government agencies that employ 15 or more full-time workers during the course of the year. The Rehabilitation Act covers workers whose employers receive federal funding. ▲



# COMMITMENT NOTICE FOR GAY COUPLE CAUSES A STIR

By **FRANK BARAN**

About year ago, Michael Kriebel bought an engagement ring for his partner, Glenn Shannon, and began planning to celebrate their union in a fitting ceremony.

They enlisted the aid of a minister, selected vows and music, and persuaded their mothers to bake a huge wedding cake, to be topped by a statue of two groomsmen.

And, just as any prospective bride and groom would do, they sent the announcement of their commitment ceremony to the Weddings and Engagements section of their local newspaper, The Reporter in Lansdale.

"I was positive they would just reject it," Kriebel said.

To his surprise, an editor called a few days later to confirm the announcement. On July 26, the four-paragraph announcement, along with a photo they had sent in, was published along with news of other soon-to-be wedded couples.

"It's still being talked about two months later in Lansdale," Kriebel said.

The newspaper initially took a lot of flak for publishing the announcement.

"I think it is appalling to see two men or two women in love with each other in real life, and I don't want to see it in print," said one caller to the newspaper's anonymous telephone comment line.

But the tide soon turned. At last count, more than 70 people had called, and 60 percent of the calls were favorable.

"Why would it shock readers when two people who happen to be gay announce their holy union?" one caller said. "This is the '90s and those people who disapprove should be ashamed of themselves."

The Reporter, which is owned by the gay-friendly Gannett Co., became one of a handful of "mainstream" newspapers in the nation to print commitment announcements for gay and lesbian couples. The newspaper defended its decision in an editorial headlined "A matter of fairness."

"Fairness. That's what it's all about," the editors said. "Until a quarter century ago some newspapers routinely discarded engagement announcements involving racial minorities for fear

of angering some readers. That practice has ceased, thank goodness, and it is time that those who practice alternative lifestyles be given equal access to the media. They are part of our community. They hold down jobs, they pay taxes, they raise families."

Kriebel and Shannon, who became partners three years ago and now live together in nearby Finland, Pa., didn't count on the fuss their announcement generated.

The couple drew heavily on their minister, the Rev. John Touchberry, pastor of St. John's United Church of Christ, for spiritual and moral support. During the ceremony, Touchberry made a point of asking the congregation not only to be witnesses to the couple's holy union, but also to be supportive of them. "That's usually not part of the ceremony," Kriebel said.

The commitment announcement caused some strains among family and friends, particularly among those who didn't realize Kriebel was gay (he had been married and has an eight-year-old daughter). But it also brought people together. Kriebel said he hadn't seen his best friend from high school in years. Out of the blue, the friend called to say he saw the announcement in the newspaper, expressed support and wished the couple well.

Kriebel said he has no regrets about making public his commitment to Shannon. "I'd do it all over again." ▲

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The Lehigh Valley Premiere

## WEIRD Romance

Music by **ALAN MENKEN** Lyrics by **DAVID SPENCER**

This off-beat, poignant musical by the composer of "Little Shop of Horrors," "Aladdin," "Beauty and the Beast" and "The Little Mermaid" offers up two-one acts of speculative fiction

**"THE GIRL WHO WAS PLUGGED IN"**  
Book by Alan Brennert and David Spencer  
Based on the story by James Tiptree, Jr.

*A bag lady agrees to have her soul transplanted into the body of a beautiful female android*

**"HER PILGRIM SOUL"** Book by Alan Brennert  
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*The life of a holographic researcher is changed forever the day that a mysterious woman - long dead - appears in his imaging chamber.*

**Oct 1 at 3 PM**  
**Oct. 6, 7, 13 & 14 at 8 PM**

ADULTS: \$10/SENIORS: \$8/STUDENTS: \$5

The Tompkins College Center Theatre

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## BABY WITH THE BATHWATER

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# SEMINAR TO DISCUSS 'PLANNING FOR COUPLES'

The absence of laws allowing for same-gender marriage leaves many gay and lesbian couples at a disadvantage. Inheritance laws treat life partners as strangers. Hospitals can forbid a partner from visiting an ailing companion. Even though their love and commitment is just as strong to each other as it would be if they were married, the government treats them as if their relationship didn't matter.

But we do have opportunities to obtain many of the benefits of marriage, even if the government doesn't yet allow it. The Task Force's board of directors voted at the Sept. 13 meeting to sponsor a seminar to help gay and lesbian couples

develop a stronger legal and financial bonds.

Steve Black, an attorney and Task Force board member, and Marianne Yasso, a registered representative for NYLIFE Securities Inc., will explain various alternatives, including cohabitation agreements, durable power of attorney, the living will and risk management.

For example, same-gender couples can use existing laws to their advantage. Black said the District of Columbia allows any same-gender couple — regardless of residency — to apply for and get a domestic partnership registration. If one

of the partners works for a company that offers domestic partnership benefits, the registration documents the validity of their relationship.

Black said the format will be similar to the one employed last January, when Bethlehem attorney Anne Felker discussed employment law regarding gay men and lesbians. Ample opportunity will be available for questions and answers.

Yasso and Black said the date for the seminar has not been scheduled. The event will be publicized once the final arrangements are completed. ▲

## VACANCY ON TASK FORCE BOARD

Want to roll up your sleeves and work for the community? Here's your chance.

A vacancy has opened on the Task Force's board of directors. Liz Fox, who was a member of the board since October 1993, resigned this summer due to new work commitments.

Under the Task Force's bylaws, the board must reflect gender parity — that is, an equal balance between males and females. Currently, the board has six men and five women.

Board members are expected to have regular attendance, become involved in at least one special program activity (communications, discrimination, fund-raising, membership, nominations, systems and structures, or youth issues), assist in the recruitment of volunteers and help in fund-raising projects and events.

If you wish to be considered for the vacancy, please send a letter of interest as soon as possible to Task Force President Manny Gonzalez at LVGLTF, P.O. Box 20253, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-0253, or call him at the Task Force information line at (610) 555-1551.

People may also apply in person at the Task Force's next open board meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the Board Room of College Center on the Northampton Community College campus in Bethlehem. ▲

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## BINGO IS BACK!

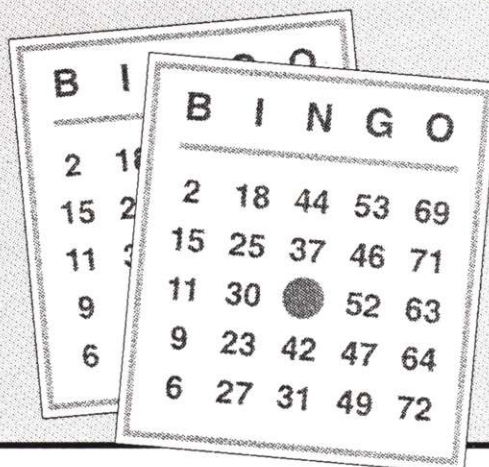
**Now that everyone's back from summer vacation, the Task Force's monthly bingo games return.**

**Enjoy the company of old and new friends during bingo games on the third Sunday of the month at Diamonz from 3 to 5 p.m.**

**The next bingo is Sunday, Oct. 15.**

**The games are \$1 for a regular card, which entitles you to compete for cash; \$2 for a special card, for products and services donated by gay or gay-friendly businesses; and \$5 for the grand prize.**

**In October's bingo, 75 percent of the proceeds will go to the Task Force programs and 25 percent will go to the AIDS Services Center in Bethlehem.**





# TASK FORCE HELPS VALLEY'S SOUP KITCHEN

The board of directors voted 6-0 at the Sept. 13 meeting to donate \$50 to the Lehigh Valley Council of Churches' soup kitchen.

The action followed the council's plea to help offset a \$11,000 deficit. "As our government is decreasing support, our soup kitchen is struggling to feed even more people," the council said.

Last year, the soup kitchen served more than 16,000 meals, and the demand is rising. The number of meals

served during the first half of this year was 500 more than that provided for the same period last year.

Since 1989, the government's contribution toward the soup kitchen has dropped by two-thirds.

Task Force board members said the gay community must reach out to the wider Lehigh Valley community. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people have a stake in making sure the valley is a better place for all its residents. ▲

## C'MON OUT ON OCT. 11

Rallies in Washington are among the 100 events scheduled for National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11.

Candace Gingrich, the openly lesbian half sister of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, and actor/writer Dan Butler of NBC's "Frasier" will speak on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Billed as "A Day of Visibility," Oct. 11 will be the culmination of a 51-city tour by Gingrich, as well as a two-month campaign of print and broadcast public service messages produced by the Human Rights Campaign Fund.

In Los Angeles, the HRCF will present the annual Dick Sargent National Coming Out Day Award for significant contributions to lesbian and gay visibility. The 1995 recipients are Butler and California State Assemblywoman Sheila J. Kuehl.

Butler, widely known for his portrayal of the womanizing sportscaster Bulldog Briscoe on "Frasier," is acclaimed for his one-man show documenting his own coming out journey, "The Only Worst Thing You Could Have Told Me." Kuehl, known for her starring role as Zelda Gilroy in the 1960s sitcom "The Many Lives of Dobey Gillis," came out with the late Dick Sargent on National Coming Out Day in 1991. She is the first openly lesbian California lawmaker.

The theme of this year's event is "Come Out, Get Involved; It Truly Makes a Difference."

"If every person in this country knew that a gay man or lesbian was part of their personal or work life, they would have a much clearer understanding about what it means to be gay," said Elizabeth Birch, HRCF executive director. "With the Supreme Court hearing arguments about the constitutionality of Colorado's Amendment Two on Oct. 10, it is more important than ever on this National Coming Out Day to come out and make your voice heard in this country."

Events include:

- Public service announcements in the top 25 media markets, on cable networks FX and Comedy Central, and in 50 national and local gay and lesbian publications.
- Gay Day at the Texas State Fair on Oct. 8.
- A weeklong series of events in Denver to emphasize the significance of the Supreme Court's examination of Colorado's anti-gay Amendment Two.
- "Out There in Hollywood," Comedy Central's third all-gay and -lesbian comedy show. Scott Thompson of "Kids in the Hall" will star.

The Human Rights Campaign Fund is the largest national lesbian and gay political organization, with a national staff and volunteers and members throughout the country. ▲

## MEETINGS

### **P-FLAG to meet**

Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (P-FLAG) meets on the second Sunday of each month from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 701 Lechaweki Ave., Fountain Hill. Everyone is welcome, regardless of your sexual orientation. For more information, call (215) 368-2473 or (215) 234-4049.

### **Gay Men return**

Gay Men of the Lehigh Valley will resume their meetings in the fall. The group has been meeting on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 7 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 701 Lechaweki Ave., Fountain Hill.

### **Support group for youth**

Your Turf, a support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth ages 16 to 22 meets on Friday evenings at 7 p.m. at 1345 Linden St., Apt. 3, Allentown. The group is sponsored by the Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley.



## JOIN US...

... in making the Lehigh Valley a better and safer place to live. You can help by becoming a member of the Task Force.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Municipality (City, borough, township) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**\$15** ☐ **Basic membership**  
Benefits: mailing list, referral database, volunteer opportunities, lesbian and gay community information, newsletter, a vote in meetings.

**\$10** ☐ **Student or senior member**  
Benefits: Same as above. However, students under 18 do not vote.

**\$25** ☐ **Family membership**  
Benefits: Same as basic member. This category is for domestic partners and their children living in the same household. Each person gets 1 vote, for a maximum of 2 votes per family. Children under 18 do not vote.

**\$30** ☐ **Organizational member**  
Benefits: newsletter, referral database, free listing in newsletter. No vote.

☐ **Contributor**  
Help the Task Force pay for mailings and other start-up expenses. Your donations would be very much appreciated.

I'd like to get involved in a Task Force committee:

- ☐ Communications
- ☐ Discrimination
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Membership
- ☐ Nominations
- ☐ Systems and Structure
- ☐ Youth Issues

Make check or money order payable to:

**LVGLTF**

**P.O. Box 20253**

**Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-0253**

## Get the Word Out!

Do you want to reach the Lehigh Valley gay community with your product or service? An advertisement in The Voice of the Valley is the way to go.

The Task Force newsletter is distributed to members and patrons of gay-friendly establishments in Lehigh and Northampton counties. Total circulation is 1,000.

### ADVERTISING RATES

Full page	\$150
Half page	\$75
Quarter page	\$50
Business card	\$25

10% discount for full year

### ADVERTISING DEADLINE

October issue	September 15
December issue	November 15

**Do you feel  
you've been  
discriminated  
against?**



For a copy of the incident report form, please call the Task Force

Hot Line at

**(610) 515-1551.**

## Have you renewed your membership?

The Task Force needs your support. Please renew your membership by filling out the form at left.

## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH!

Have you moved? Let us know. The Membership Committee needs to know your current address so we can be sure to send you the Voice of the Valley and other announcements. Use this handy form:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR OLD ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NEW ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

MUNICIPALITY \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_